



ATRIP

ALABAMA TEACHER RECRUITMENT INCENTIVE PROGRAM

Q & A with Superintendent of Education Dr. Joe Morton:

Q: How did the ATRIP initiative come about?

A: "It's a culmination of several years of observations and anecdotal evidence about the shortage of teachers in the nation and in our state. I think it culminated with the governor's commission on quality teaching because that represents virtually every aspect in Alabama. Everybody agreed that we have a problem. We've got a shortage of teachers and we need to do something to attract people into the field of education. This is a proactive attempt to address the shortage in Alabama through scholarships."

Q: Is there a shortage of teachers in Alabama?

A: "We have a shortage nationwide. We have a graying of Americas teaching force. There's not just a shortage this year or next year. There's going to be a shortage for the next 10 years."

Q: What is ATRIP in a nutshell?

A: "They can get \$5,000 a year for four years to help pay for that very expensive college education and then they can teach four years and pay nothing back. It would be quote 'a gift from the State of Alabama to them.' All they have to do in return is teach four years."

Q: What would you say to students to direct them toward a career in teaching?

A: "I think one thing I would do is make sure they understand the new pay scale. I think most eighteen-year-olds and most nineteen-year-olds like to know what might I make if I choose this profession over that profession. The pay scale in Alabama for teachers has improved greatly over the past three years. One thing is to let them know what they can potentially make as a teacher."

Q: What is the commitment for those students who receive the scholarship?

A: "They have to take a job in a public school in Alabama and each year they work they remove the obligation to pay back those years worth of scholarships, \$5,000. So if they teach four years they have just wiped clean the debt of \$20,000; they owe nothing, no interest, no carrying charges, free and clear \$20,000 to help pay for a college education."

Q: When will students know if they have been selected to receive an ATRIP scholarship?

A: "Every student that is in high school in Alabama that has an interest in becoming a teacher and is in one of our critical needs areas can apply and if they are selected they will know if they get the scholarship before they graduate from high school."

Q: How are you getting the word out about ATRIP?

A: "We will be advertising around Alabama in theatres that show movies that interest young people. We will be creating posters, we will be creating brochures, obviously the application itself, and we will saturate high schools with all of this information early in 2008 so that they can work through their guidance offices and their schools counselors and others within the high schools to make sure every student knows of the availability of these scholarships."



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Q & A with Dr. Gregory Fitch, Executive Director of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE):

Q: Who are you targeting with the ATRIP Scholarships?

A: “We have the high school seniors that we are targeting at this time as they exit high school and enter college and they’re a student in good standing. The second one is the alternative certification. These are people with bachelor’s degrees at this time or other degrees who decided they want to enter the teacher corps. They’ll come back to college and pick up courses and they have a scholarship component as well.”

Q: How many scholarships will be awarded?

A: “Presently for the high school students there are 100 scholarships available and those scholarships are for four years so when they’re granted they will be granted for the four year cycle as long as they remain in good standing. There are approximately 60 scholarships available for the alternate certification.”

Q: What is the process for applying?

A: “You can download the application, have that information available to you, look it over, see what the commitments are, and all of the restrictions. With that application you would go to your particular institution. Once identified as enrolled at that institution that student, as a student in good standing, you would be certified by the financial aid officer that you have enrolled and you are in the teacher corps program; fully understand the requirements; and then that would be sent to us (ACHE). Once it’s sent to us it will be received and certified, then funds will be sent to that institution to support you in the scholarship program.”

Q: Upon graduating from college with a teaching degree the students must teach in one of four critical needs areas, what are those?

A: “A student graduating from the program under the loan program would have to work in English Language Arts, Math, General Science or Special Education. Those are four critical areas identified in Alabama with need. A student then graduating would teach in one of those areas at an Alabama public school and continue to do so over a period of time. To completely eliminate the loans they would have to teach for four years reducing their loan one year for every year of work, for every year of borrowing or they can eliminate it totally with the four years.”

Q: What should students be aware of before signing on the dotted line?

A: “If you’ve accepted the scholarship for four years and then you decide not to teach, upon exit from college you would be responsible for repayment for those particular four years – the full amount of the loan at an eight percent interest rate.”

Q: Is ACHE concerned about the shortage of teachers?

A: “ACHE, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education is very concerned about the quality of our teaching corps that we develop and we’ve got to get good teachers through our colleges and universities training for K-12.”